

Help on the way



ASSESSING NEEDS — Scottie Stice (outside right), assistant state director of disaster relief for the Southern Baptist Convention of Texas, discusses relief priorities with Baptist pastor Nabanglo Driz (outside left), while Driz's wife Fely (inside right) counsels a local woman whose house was badly damaged by Typhoon Haiyan. (BP photo courtesy of International Mission Board)

Miss. Baptists prepare for activation in Haiyan relief

TABUELAN, Philippines (BP and local reports) — The Mississippi Disaster Relief Task Force has been notified

to prepare for activation in the near future in response to the devastation in Philippines caused by Hurricane Haiyan,

according to Don Gann, consultant in the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

"Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief will be a part of the long-term response to

see RELIEF on p. 8

Illinois, Hawaii latest to approve same sex marriage

WASHINGTON (BP) — The political movement to legalize same sex marriage has achieved victory in two more states.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, a Democrat, and Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie, a Democrat, signed into law Nov. 20 and Nov. 13, respectively, bills granting marriage rights, benefits, and protections to people of the same sex.

Same sex marriage is now legal in 16 states and the District of Columbia.

In 2013, same sex marriage has become legal in seven states, the most of any year so far, and the same sex marriage movement could add another state before 2014. New Mexico's Supreme Court heard oral arguments Oct. 23 for the purpose of ruling whether judicial decisions legalizing same sex marriage in two counties should be extended throughout the state.

The homosexual rights movement has "never come this far this fast," Fred Sainz said in a Nov. 18 email to supporters of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), according to ABC News. Sainz is vice president of communications

and marketing for HRC, the country's largest political organization advocating for homosexual, bisexual, and transgender rights.

"LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender) equality advanced more in 2013 than in any other year and at a pace never before seen," he said.

The same sex marriage trend calls for faithful witness by Christians, countered a Southern Baptist policy specialist.

"No one denies that the wind is to the backs of the marriage revisionist movement, and this will likely continue for some time," Andrew Walker said in a statement to Baptist Press (BP). Walker is director of policy studies for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

"What matters now is that a critical mass of individuals, ideas, and organizations join together to promote the true nature of marriage," Walker said. "On marriage, some knees may buckle if cultural fame is what you're striving after, but what matters right

see STATES on p. 11

Baptist physician shuns spotlight, credits God

JACKSON, Miss. (BP and local reports) — The continued good health of a three-year-old child born with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) causes Baptist physician Hannah Gay, the HIV specialist who treats the child at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC) in Jackson, to speak of divine intervention.

"I think He's teaching me submission with all of the speaking business. I don't particularly like that, but it is an opportunity for me to be able to say... when I treated this baby I was not even thinking of curing the baby. That was the furthest thing from my mind. I was simply trying to prevent infection and I failed at what I was try-

ing to do," she said, seeing failure in her inability to keep the baby from being born HIV-positive.

"However, my failure in God's hands turned into a miracle and it was God that cured the baby and I just happened to be standing close by at the time."

The child remains in remission more than 18 months after her last anti-viral treatment. "Hopefully we'll be able to find out what it was about this case that was different from all the others that we've ever seen and be able to replicate that for other babies in the future," said Gay, a former Southern Baptist missionary and active member of Trace

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MEDICAL PIONEER — Pediatrician Hannah Gay, an associate professor of pediatric infectious diseases at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, pioneered a treatment that has led to remission of HIV in a baby born with the disease three years ago. (BP photo courtesy of The University of Mississippi Medical Center)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Naghmeh's anguish

You could hear it in her voice. Even reading her words on an inanimate sheet of paper was painful. While U.S. President Barack Obama, his Secretary of State John Kerry, and a fawning news media heralded an empty nuclear agreement with Iran that settles nothing, Naghmeh Abedini was in anguish.

Her husband, American pastor Saeed Abedini, was languishing in a dangerous prison in Iran, tortured and denied medical care and visitation, while the likes of Obama and Kerry were raising champagne toasts to themselves and patting each other on the back after being plainly outwitted in negotiations with representatives of the Muslim extremist Iranian government.

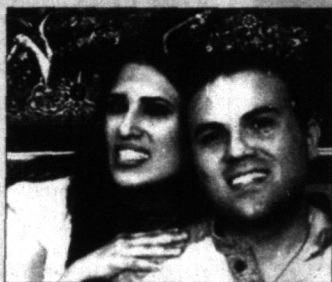
Ignoring the pleas of Saeed's family and millions of American Christians, the Obama administration didn't see fit to even mention the pastor's name during talks with the Iranians.

"My kids are crying every day. They are saying, 'Please keep daddy alive,' and my government let the one, crucial opportunity for bringing my husband home pass by. I feel betrayed. Honestly, I don't know if he will survive it. I seriously fear for his life," Naghmeh told Reuters reporter Laura Zuckerman.

She has reason to fear for Saeed's life. After being arrested at the site of an orphanage he was helping to build in his native Iran, Saeed was convicted on nebulous charges of being a threat to national security and sentenced to eight years in prison. After serving a year at the notoriously brutal Evin Prison in Tehran, where he was isolated, tortured, beaten by other inmates, and considered untouchable by the medical staff, he disappeared deeper into the maw of the country's prison system and has not been heard from in several weeks.

"This was the most significant opportunity, while Secretary of State John Kerry was sitting across the table from Saeed's captors, to gain his freedom. It was an historic blunder," Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, told Zuckerman.

Sekulow and the American Center for Law and Justice, headquartered in Washington, D.C., are representing Naghmeh and her family in the international effort to free Saeed.



HAPPIER TIMES - Naghmeh and her pastor husband Saeed before he was sentenced to prison in Iran in 2012. (BP photo)

It's hard to imagine that the leaders of the planet's sole remaining super power would cower before the international criminals running the Iranian theocracy, too timid to ask for the simple, straightforward release of an American unjustly imprisoned in a foreign nation. That is apparently the case, however.

An American - an American pastor - is in real danger of dying from brutality and neglect in the prison system of a country that hates Americans, and our leaders are too small to care. Listen to the cold, clinical detachment in the words of White House deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes in remarks recently broadcast on CNN, as quoted by Zuckerman:

The Iranians make assertions based on their own legal system. We reject those assertions that these individuals have a legal basis for being detained. It shows one thing, which is that we're trying to resolve the nuclear issue, which is of great concern to us, but even as we are doing that, it doesn't lessen our concern about other activities of the Iranian government.

That is nothing but verbal nonsense, but it passes in this administration for a substantial statement on a life and death situation. Fact is, they don't care that an American is in serious trouble in a hostile land. Even more to the point, they don't care that an American Christian is in serious trouble in a hostile land.

They need not try to deny it. Actions speak louder than words.

Remembering C.S. Lewis

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP) - C.S. Lewis died the same day as John F. Kennedy 50 years ago. Twenty years before that in the midst of World War II, before the Normandy invasion when the outcome of the war was still uncertain, Lewis delivered a series of lectures for Durham University in northern England that he published as *The Abolition of Man*.

Had he written nothing else, Lewis would be important for how Christians understand culture because of his analysis of the great change occurring in our culture that now almost has come to completion.

Lewis only wrote one more piece of philosophical apologetics after writing *The Abolition of Man*, as he shifted to a different form of apologetics that would speak to the changing culture more effectively.

Lewis argued that our educational system had begun to teach children that all values are only statements about how we feel. If values are only statements of feelings, then nothing is right or wrong in itself. We may not like something, but that is only the way we feel about it. Objective value does not exist from this point of view.

This perspective frees people from any moral or ethical constraints, since morals and ethics would only be someone's personal feelings and everyone has a right to their own feelings. Of course, if we no longer have any absolute values of right and wrong, then we no longer have anything that we can call "rights." We only have what happens.

Lewis anticipated the changes that have occurred in Britain, the United States, and Canada since World War II related to the broad cultural understanding of morality. He accurately predicted the rise of relativism and the urge to venture into areas of human genetic science that would once have been written about only in horror stories.

Without moral constraint, humans become inhuman; thus, *The Abolition of Man*.

Though Lewis lamented the loss of critical thinking and the blind acceptance of relativism, he also knew that one form of communication remained that still had powerful force even when people could no longer attend to a rational argument along the lines of his philosophical apologetics.



Guest opinion
with Harry Lee Poe

Stories still move people, so Lewis then focused his apologetic energies on writing stories that caused people to feel appropriately about the issues of abuse of power, sexual immorality, truth, faithfulness, and a variety of other spiritual issues.

He wrote two science fiction novels that explored the moral limits to scientific experimentation and the very idea that some things are simply wrong. In *Perelandra*, and in *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis laid out compelling stories that portrayed the moral dilemmas about which the reader must decide. The reader cannot help but conclude that the bad guys are bad.

Art works on our feelings while philosophy works on our intellect. When the two are combined, a formidable force emerges. C.S. Lewis excelled at combining the two.

In the 1950s, Lewis wrote a series of seven children's stories called *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In these books, Lewis tells stories with Christian values undergirding the background of the stories. They work as apologetics because they first work as good stories for children.

Lewis said that this kind of book by a Christian was the best kind of apologetics, for it focuses on its subject, but the faith of the Christian permeates the whole as the foundational assumption of reality.

Fifty years after his death, the works of C.S. Lewis may speak even more powerfully now than in his own lifetime because he had the insight to understand the culture in which he lived and how to address it with the Gospel, even as it was turning into something his own generation later would not recognize.

Poe is the Charles Colson Professor of Faith and Culture at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. He also is the author of *The Inklings of Oxford: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Their Friends*, and co-editor of *C.S. Lewis Remembered: Collected Reflections of Students, Friends, and Colleagues*. Edited for style.



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Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and address changes to: The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
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BAPTISTS

VOLUME 137/JUNE • NUMBER 47 • ISSN-0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items - one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising - two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Typhoon aftermath a shocker for Baptist worker

MANILA, Philippines (BP) — The stench was overwhelming. "I can't breathe. It's burning my eyes," Makenzie Baker told three Filipino co-workers.

With no choice but to continue, they trekked forward over the remains of buildings, animals, and bodies in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, when most people were leaving the city of Tacloban.



BAKER

A graduate from Union University in Jackson, Tenn., Baker went to the Philippines to spend a semester serving through the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in its Hands On program for involving college students and graduates in missions at a grassroots level.

Baker's assignment was to serve among the Waray Waray, an unreached people group on the island of Samar, and to follow up on work that student teams and a short-term worker started.

For the past few months, Illinois native Baker traveled up and down the Ulot River spending the night in different villages, building relationships, and studying the Bible with villagers.

Though Typhoon Haiyan damaged some homes and schools in the region, people were returning to life as normal. Baker had no idea of the extent of the typhoon's devastation in other parts of the Philippines.

After the Nov. 8 typhoon passed, Baker jumped back into her ministry and traveled to a larger village the next day where a Filipino pastor encouraged them to go to the city of Tacloban, which had suffered widespread destruction.

Baker said she wasn't sure about going to Tacloban, a city of about 200,000, not having any idea of the circumstances there. She decided to proceed, spending four hours on rough mountainous roads in three different vehicles, punctuated by several flat tires, before reaching their ministry base camp at the town of Can-Avid.

IMB missionary Kim Cruise reached Baker by cell phone and tried to prepare her for what she would see and experience in the aftermath of the worst storm to ever hit the Philippines.

Baker and her three Filipino ministry partners boarded a bus to Tacloban. At a major bridge, a mob of traumatized people began attacking the bus, demanding that it turn around and take them away from the devastation.

Baker had to crawl through a window to get out of the bus. She and her ministry partners took a bicycle taxi across the bridge and then set out on foot, hiking 15 miles in a blazing hot sun.

As Baker hiked, she noticed how the Filipino demeanor had changed drastically. Filipinos are known for being protective of westerners, but people carrying rice sacks kept running into Baker, nearly trampling her several times.

"They are normally so friendly and kind and hospitable," Baker said. "You had to be aggressive to get through there."

On the trek, Baker said she was worrying whether she'd be able to return to her ministry among the Waray Waray people. That's when she said God gave her Proverbs 4:25-26. "Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure" (ESV).

Dead bodies littered the road. The smell of decaying flesh was crippling, both physically and emotionally. Baker and her companions had no choice but to continue walking over and around dead bodies, meditating on the verses in Proverbs.

She and her companions passed many Filipinos who were just sitting by the side of the road in a daze. Baker realized why they were just sitting after reaching Tacloban.

"It is just so overwhelming the amount of destruction there," she said.

All of the landmarks were gone, and Baker and her friends had trouble finding their way through the city. As darkness fell, she realized they needed



STARTING OVER — A family living in the northern part of Cebu Island in the Philippines use the tools at hand to begin the process of clearing debris from their homestead after Typhoon Haiyan on Nov. 8. Entire villages on Cebu Island were wiped out. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

to find shelter. Desperate crowds were stealing from stores and from people passing by. They hiked for another hour and were about to give up on trying to find a local church.

"I looked up and there is another American," Baker said. "My Filipino partners start talking to him and he answers in perfect Cebuano. He said, 'We've been looking everywhere for you,'" Baker recounted.

"Why are you looking for me?" she said she asked.

Baker then learned that the American was Stan Smith, an IMB missionary on the island of Cebu who had traveled for hours, hiking for a long portion of the journey on foot through destroyed vil-

lages, to find her and IMB missionaries Carl and Suzie Miller.

Smith and Baker subsequently found the Millers in their typhoon-ravaged home in Tacloban. He, Baker, and the Millers waited for six hours at the airport to be flown to Manila by U.S. Marines on a C-130 airplane.

"It was like the things you see on the movies. God gave us all strength," she said. "God kept us so safe."

Amazingly, she didn't have any blisters or cuts from nails from the hours of hiking.

Saying goodbye to her Filipino teammates was one of the hardest things she's done, she said. "Even though I am upset, I know God has a purpose."

Former defense secretary tapped for top Boy Scouts post

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP) — The man who helped pave the way for homosexuals to serve openly in the military will become the new volunteer leader of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) in 2014.

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates became the president-elect of the BSA on Oct. 30. According to a statement released by the Boy Scouts, "This move means that upon approval of voting members of the National Council, Gates would begin a two-year term as the BSA national president in May 2014." Gates will succeed Wayne Perry, the current national president.

The selection of Gates for this role was unexpected. AT&T chairman Randall Stephenson, a high-profile supporter of allowing homosexu-

als in BSA, has been Scouting's BSA president-elect the past two years. The normal procedure would have been for him to become president.

According to Richard Matthews, a former general counsel for the Boy Scouts, "I believe this is unprecedented."

Scouting spokesman Deron Smith said the selection of Gates "is not related to the BSA's membership standards policy." Smith would not answer questions from WORLD Magazine about Gates' or the BSA's plans for implementing new policy that allows openly homosexual boys to participate in Scouting.

"The BSA just completed a review of its membership policies and there are no plans to discuss it further," Smith said.

Smith added that Gates has

had a long association with Scouting and had been slated for a BSA leadership role until his service as secretary of defense and CIA director made that impossible.

"This move was made because the BSA had the opportunity to take advantage of a unique moment to add Dr. Gates," Smith said.

Stephenson will continue to serve in the role of president-elect during the Gates presidency. "Aside from timing," Smith said, "nothing has changed."

Matthews, who now serves as general counsel for TrailLife USA, a Christian alternative to the Boy Scouts, said it is a "very difficult thing to know" whether Gates will be more or less likely than Stephenson to allow homosexual leaders in the BSA.

"Both of them have been outspoken about their belief that homosexuality should not bar participation or leadership roles in organizations," Matthews said. "Certainly if an organization planned on making such a change there would be great value in having someone as its leader who has already supported and led such a change in the Department of Defense."

Pro-homosexual groups praised the Boy Scouts for the move to bring Gates on board.

"Former Defense Secretary Gates has previously confronted discrimination head on, ushering in a new era of equality in our nation's armed forces," said Wilson Cruz, a spokesman for the homosexual activist group GLAAD. "We urge Dr. Gates to continue his

work to ensure all people are treated equally, no matter who they are and no matter what uniform they wear."

A homosexual Scouting advocacy group agreed. "We are glad to hear that the Boy Scouts of America intends to elect former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates as president of the BSA's Executive Board," said Zach Wahls of Scouts for Equality. "Mr. Gates has led a distinguished career of service to our nation — including the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' — and we hope he will continue that legacy by leading the Boy Scouts into a future that protects all its youth and parents, regardless of their sexual orientation."

Used by permission from WORLD News Service.

The statement, "Thanks, but no thanks," usually applies to a situation where somebody is offering you something or making you a deal on something, but you realize that the ramifications, aftermath and the additional expense of it will be too great to accept. So you say, "Thanks, but no thanks!" Years ago, I was at a flea market and there was a fellow selling ducks. Well, actually I am not sure what they were, but they looked like beautiful white swans. When he saw the interest that I had in the ducks, he began to bargain and try to get me to buy one or two. My youthful exuberance kicked into gear and I began to think about how attractive they would be walking around in our country yard. Then I realized that we did not have a pond, a lake or anything that would be enjoyed by a duck. Still, I was interested and the more I rejected the man's offer, the more he reduced the price and the more determined he was to see that I left there with a duck or two. Finally, all I could do was to say, "Thanks, but no thanks!"

Here just days away from Thanksgiving, I am thinking about that experience in Jesus' life when He met the 10 lepers. This may be the most preached passage in the Bible at Thanksgiving. Luke recorded that these 10 men, who had no doubt banded together because they could have nothing to do with anyone else, were excluded from society because of their disease. They were forced to yell out a warning to anyone who was getting close to them, "Unclean, unclean!" People would immediately react and get further away because of their leprosy.

Can you imagine the loneliness that would fill a person's heart when they can have nothing to do with anyone around them? Can you imagine the anger that could build up because society treated them the way that they did? Can you imagine the contempt that they would have for everyone else because they were excluded and looked down upon? And yet everything was about to change in their lives because Jesus was going to



Thanks, but No Thanks

heal them, cleanse them of their leprosy and they would be set free. They could re-enter society and be accepted. They would have a normal life again. Oh what a radical change it would make and what a glorious day it must have been when the Lord set them free.

As required in the Old Testament, they must be checked and declared clean by the high priest. And so after their healing, they joyfully went charging off to the high priest. Suddenly, they realized that a miracle really had happened. They were clean, whole and renewed. And while it happened to all of them, only one returned to Jesus. The other nine moved on toward the priest. Visibly, if not verbally, they went on their way showing thanks, but no thanks.

Do you think that they were thankful? They had to be. Do you think that they thought about the man that had given them a new lease on life? I feel certain that they did, but they did not take the time, show the interest or give the energy to come back and say to the one who had blessed them, "Thank you!" They may have felt thankful but there was no thanks offered to the one who had given them the great gift of freedom, life and hope. It was one of those thanks like we have sometimes, "Thanks, but no thanks!" There is no expression of

appreciation for the kindness and care that someone has shown us.

What happens to our thanks? When we pause for a moment and think of the great things that God has done for us, we know that we have received immeasurable and innumerable blessings from Him, but with little frequency do we stop and say, "Lord, we thank you for the blessings." Why? Well, here are just a few of my thoughts here at Thanksgiving time.

It may be our dumbness. I know that we are not dumb or stupid people, but sometimes we are just thoughtlessly dumb for we fail to recognize the very source of our blessed condition. James writes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). The great prophet Isaiah says that even the donkey knows his master's crib, and yet we sometimes just grab and go. We do not recognize the great source of our health, the blessings of relationships, the great joy of service and the incredible goodness that comes from our work. The nine lepers knew what had happened and who had given them healing. We know where our blessings come from too. But we just must plead selective ignorance about it

because we go on without saying, "Dear God, thank you!"

Another suggestion for why we do not give thanks is because we are diverted. We are not just dumb, we are diverted. I think about those nine lepers and I wonder how long it had been since they had been with their families, friends or in a social gathering? Maybe as they left Jesus realizing what had taken place in their lives, all they could think about was the glorious and wonderful things that were ahead. Their attention was diverted. I know that happens at times because it has happened to me. There are people, opportunities and situations that have blessed me so, but because of the circumstances, travel and the rush to be somewhere else my attention was diverted. I missed the blessing of saying thank you.

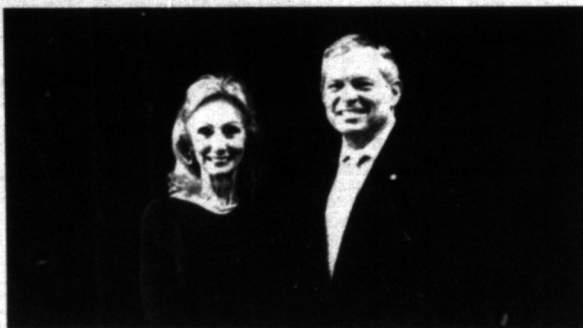
Another thing that possibly keeps us from delivering the thanks that we may feel is dissipation. We fully intend to do it. We will write a note, make a call or see someone and say, "You just do not know how thankful I am for what you did." But the time passes, life moves on and the thanksgiving that you intended to give just simply dissipates. From time to time there is a flash of how wonderful the blessing was but you do not reach back, grab it and follow up on it. The whole experience dissipates.

A final thought about why we do not express thanks and why so many times we experience thanks, but no thanks is because of our discouragement. A good blessing comes but just down the road and maybe totally disconnected from that event is a discouraging event that overwhelms us, dominates our life and captures all of our thought process. As a result, rather than even pausing to say thank you, we fall back into the pits of discouragement and even complaining. This Thanksgiving, let's do it!

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

College News

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE recognized their alumna of the year during recent homecoming events. Sharon Martin received the top award. She has been a physician at Mississippi State Hospital since 1996 and has served on the Board of Trustees for MC. She graduated with a biology degree in 1972 and earned her medical degree magna cum laude from the University of Mississippi Medical Center in 1983. She is shown with president [unclear].



Staff Changes

In Staff News:

► Jim Rutledge, Amory, has retired after pastoring for 45 years and is now available for interim or transitional work. He can be contacted at (662) 256-9780 or 646-1693.

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VRUEOH XWO: NRDV

Clue: H = S

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Galatians 4:4

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Ken. trustees turn back attempt to hire homosexuals

MOUNT WASHINGTON, Ky. (BP) — After enduring a dozen years of defending lawsuits stemming from the firing of a lesbian worker, the board of directors of Sunrise Children's Services rejected a recommendation Nov. 8 to change the Kentucky Baptist childcare agency's hiring practices.

Sunrise Children's Services will continue its practice of "informing applicants that the organization does not hire gay people," according to a press release from Brandi Felser, chief operating officer of Sunrise.

"Let us be clear about this vote," said Joyce Smith, Sunrise board chair. "With this decision, we are not promoting anything other than the physical, mental, and spiritual welfare of our children."

"We remain focused on our mission of providing love and support to the victimized children that Sunrise serves and our decision today will not affect the everyday care Sunrise provides to families and children."

Upon hearing the board's action, Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood rejoiced in "the courage and conviction exhibited by the board's decision," and added, "While I know, given where our culture

is headed, government funding for Sunrise may someday be in jeopardy, I recommit my personal and financial support as well as my advocacy for this Great Commandment ministry of Kentucky Baptists. We will stand with this board," Chitwood pledged.

Dan Summerlin, president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and pastor of Lone Oak First Church in Paducah, also lauded the "courageous" board's decision and thanked its members for standing on God's principles.

"I also want to thank all Kentucky Baptists for their prayers and efforts to express their feelings on this matter. My prayer is now for [Sunrise and the KBC] to move forward by sitting down together and working on building a stronger bond between SCS and the KBC."

In the news release, Sunrise President Bill Smithwick stated the board "understands and respects" the position of those who may not like its decision.

"For those that do not agree with our practice, we understand and we would love to have you join us in putting the kids first and support our mission of helping the least among us: victimized children who need a safe haven and the chance to see love and experience hope."

Smithwick added he was

"We remain focused on our mission of providing love and support to the victimized children that Sunrise serves and our decision today will not affect the everyday care Sunrise provides to families and children."

Joyce Smith

Sunrise board chair

hopeful that support remains strong to continue the mission of providing assistance to fragile young people who have been served by the organization since 1869.

"We need the assistance of caring people everywhere," Smithwick said.

In a recent letter to Kentucky Baptist pastors, Smithwick disclosed that its board of directors was discussing the possibility of altering the ministry's anti-discrimination policy. At an Aug. 16 meeting, the proposal was tabled until the board's meeting last Friday.

"The day is soon coming when sexual preference will become protected status attached to Federal monies and will likely be added to State monies, forcing anyone who accepts either to comply or close," Smithwick wrote. "This is not an 'if' but a 'when' event... Thus the core question, 'Will Sunrise change its hiring practices or not? Will we walk away from the broken,

forsaken, lonely kids who can hear the Gospel, find love, forgiveness, and hope through our mission because we choose to focus on one sin, while overlooking the many others? Or, will we seek the greater good to save the kids?"

Chitwood, however, opposed the proposed change in Sunrise's hiring practices. "If the trustees decide to follow Smithwick and surrender biblical values to maintain government funding, then clearly they will have forsaken the Baptist character of Sunrise and become the equivalent of any secular corporation that contracts with the state to provide childcare."

West Kentucky directors of missions launched a letter-writing campaign and petition drive calling for trustees to oppose changes in Sunrise's hiring practices. The group, representing 12 Baptist associations, urged fellow DOMs across the state to "take a stand" for biblical values, stating, "This is not a

battle against homosexuals, but a stand against this sin becoming so culturally acceptable that we evade calling it sin."

Following the Aug. 16 meeting, one trustee, Rick Fyffe of Ashland, resigned in protest. Another, Stan Spees of Paducah, expressed his concerns to Kentucky Baptist Convention leaders.

In 1998, Sunrise, then known as Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, fired an employee when it became known that she was a lesbian. Since then, the agency has been embroiled in a lawsuit with the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State over the use of taxpayer funds by faith-based organizations.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky has reached a settlement in the suit, including a stipulation that religiously-affiliated organizations receiving state funds neither pressure children to participate in religious activities nor read religious materials.

Sunrise has opposed the agreement, claiming that it unfairly singles them out for scrutiny not required for other childcare agencies that contract with the state. Meanwhile, a suit filed against Sunrise by the former employee and three others remains in litigation.

Federal judge strikes down ministerial housing allowance

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention's religious freedom and financial benefits entities both expressed their opposition to a recent federal court ruling invalidating the ministerial housing allowance.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville and GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas protested a Nov. 22 decision by Wisconsin federal Judge Barbara Crabb that struck down the portion of a 1954 federal law that allows clergy to exclude for federal income tax purposes a portion or all of their gross income as a housing allowance.

She ruled that the provision violates

the First Amendment's prohibition on government establishment of religion.

Crabb, a senior judge in the Western District of Wisconsin who was appointed to the bench by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, blocked enforcement of her opinion until the appeals process in the lawsuit is complete.

In a combined news release Nov. 23, ERLC and GuideStone officials expressed their solidarity in working to protect the housing allowance. "The clergy housing allowance isn't a government establishment of religion, but just the reverse," ERLC President Russell D. Moore said. "The allowance is neutral to all religions. Without it, clergy in small

congregations of all sorts would be penalized and harmed."

"We will continue to fight to protect the housing allowance, because we believe clergy are essential for flourishing, vibrant communities," Moore said.

GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said, "Although this particular case does not have immediate impact, we know that pastors and others in ministry are facing challenges in our very own nation as never before. This decision, while not unanticipated, is sadly symptomatic of our culture today."

"We count it a privilege to be an advocate for those who have given their lives to ministry — and we will not forsake our mission to undergird those who so faithfully serve our churches and ministries."

At its website, GuideStone describes the housing allowance as "the most important tax benefit available to ministers. Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code allows 'ministers of the gospel' to exclude some or all of their ministerial income designated by their church or church-related employer as a housing allowance from income for federal income tax purposes."

The allowance has been especially helpful to smaller congregations because their pastors or ministers, who typically receive lower salaries, benefit from part of their income being non-taxable.

A 2002 estimate offered by then-Congressman Jim Ramstad of Minnesota said the housing allowance would

save ministers \$2.3 billion in taxes during the following five years.

Crabb's decision came as no surprise. In 2010, she ruled the National Day of Prayer violates the establishment clause. A three-judge panel of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago unanimously struck down Crabb's ruling the following year.

The appeals court ruled the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) did not have standing to bring the lawsuit.

The FFRF, which is based in Madison, Wis., was qualified to sue federal officials in the housing allowance case, Crabb ruled, and its co-presidents celebrated the judge's decision. "The rest of us should not pay more because clergy pay less," Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker said.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said in a statement for Baptist Press, "The clergy housing allowance exemption is a special government subsidy extended only to religious leaders. On those grounds, it appears to be a violation of church-state separation."

"The exemption was crafted during a time when many congregations maintained parsonages and were structured much differently than they are now. I'm sure this decision will be appealed. Regardless of what happens, I hope America's religious and political leaders take this opportunity to consider revamping some old practices that may no longer make sense in the modern era."

Defenders of the housing allowance appeared hopeful the Seventh Circuit Court would again reverse Crabb.

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Just for the Record



FIRST CHURCH, NEW ALBANY, held a deacon ordination service Nov. 17. Shown with interim pastor David Shackelford are Tommy and Joyce Peters and Chad and Lauren Bailey.



FAIR RIVER CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, recently dedicated their newly renovated fellowship hall. Shown are pastor Jay Anderson, Lana Philipp, Janice Nations, Joyce Moore, Sandy Fielder, Kathy Waycaster, and Charleen Dickson.



TRINITY CHURCH, MONROE ASSOCIATION, held a Heart Saver CPR class Nov. 16 for their nursery and children workers. Shown are the participants with pastor Justin Simmons.



The youth of **IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREENWOOD**, had a Q & A time about the military with a group of veterans from the church. Shown, from left, are Bill Thornburg, Dwayne Smith, Charles Scrivener, David Clark (standing), Fred Palmer-tree, and Hugh Therrell.



(At left) **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, conducted Sunday School and discipleship training attendance promotion during October. Pastor Hal Hatten agreed to have his mustache and hair "buzzed" if the combined attendance of 900 was obtained. Shown are Hatten and Margie Montgomery.



SINGLETON CHURCH, WINSTON, recently held a baby dedication. Shown are pastor Lawrence Runnels, and baby Manny with parents Heather and Conner Romyedy.



CEDAR GROVE CHURCH, COLUMBIA, dedicated its children's playground Oct. 20.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I give Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name. (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

I was born in Shreveport, LA and come from a very broken family. My parents were divorced before I was one year old because my father was abusing both drugs and my family (mother and siblings). During the next few years, my grandfather helped my mother in raising us, and he was my first example of a godly man. He was the one who was up every morning before the sun so that he could spend time with the Word of God. Every night as we went to bed, he made sure we said our prayers. It wasn't until years later that I realized just how much of an impact my grandfather's spiritual disciplines had on my walk with Christ. At such a young age, I saw what it meant and looked like to pursue Christ and grow in godliness.

When I was about five years old, my mother remarried and we moved down to New Orleans. My stepfather was a good man; he loved family, he always provided for us, and made sure we were safe. However, my parents never found a church in the area where they felt welcomed, and eventually we ended up not attending anywhere. As the years continued, I was highly involved in every sport I could play. My family was always at the ballpark, including Sunday's. For me, sports were my life. It was there that I found my identity as a young boy.

When I was eight years old, my biological father passed away from a heart attack. As a young kid trying to figure out what that meant for me, I realized that I would never know my father.

As I was entering eighth grade at Holy Cross High School, I was projected to be the star athlete. I had every opportunity there to grow into the man I wanted to be. However, two weeks into this school year, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. Though my home was fine, my 150 year old school had more than twenty feet of floodwater and was destroyed.

My family evacuated back to Shreveport, LA, and that year was a growing year for my family. For the first time in almost ten years, we were back in church. It was in the spring of that school year that I realized my sin before God and



featuring
Chris Litton

Testimony COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

CP Starts New Ministry with College Students

how hopeless I was apart from Christ. I confessed my sins and my need for a Savior, and by the grace of God I was saved.

Later, my family and I moved back to New Orleans. As my junior year rolled around, I ended up tearing up my shoulder playing football. I had a season ending surgery to repair it, but I was determined to make it back for one last year of playing ball before I graduated. It was during this time of my life that I, along with seven others, was asked to represent my high school at a leadership retreat in New York, NY in March 2009. At the retreat, I was reminded what it really means to live a life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ. I realized here that my indulgence in sin was because I was broken by not knowing my father who had passed away years earlier, and because my identity was in something that is fleeting. In 2009, I was freed by the truth that I do have a Father, and He is loving and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. I realized that my identity is found in Christ and His completed work on the cross!

I returned home and found a church in which to grow. My youth pastor, and

now mentor, was very intentional in helping me grow in Christ. He sharpened my spiritual gifts of leadership, service, and teaching as I used these serving our church. Though I was still holding on to my sports as my priority, I sensed God was calling me to the ministry. In the first football game of that season, I took a hard hit and cracked my skull. I could no longer play football. As I stood on the sideline during one of our games in the days to follow, I began to question God. I was angry with Him because He hadn't given me my one desire, which was to play my senior year of high school ball. At halftime of that same game, I took a step back and said, "Alright God, I know you are Sovereign and I know that you allowed this injury to happen for some reason. Why, God?" And as I stood there on the sideline, the Spirit of God brought this peace over me, and I heard God say, "I allowed this to happen so you would stop doing what you want to do, and start doing what I have called you to do." It was there that I gave my life to the ministry.

I began looking for colleges and heard about Mississippi College from

a friend. Once I visited the campus, I knew that this was where I was supposed to be. When I told my mother, she said we could not afford it. But MC was able to work with us, we took a step of faith, as we trusted God with our finances. It wasn't always easy, and there have been times where we just barely made payment, but not once have we ever been late. The Cooperative Program has helped me to get my education at MC by providing much needed scholarship money. I'm not sure that could have happened had I not had the financial support I did. God has provided for all of my family's needs, and He has proven time and time again that He is faithful.

While at MC, I have had the privilege to serve at Alta Woods Baptist Church in South Jackson as the Children, Youth and College Pastor during my first two years of college. While there, we saw God doing mighty things through His Church. The children and youth ministry grew from 14 students to more than 100 in my two years there, with more than 30 salvations. At this present time, they have had steady numbers of 100 neighborhood students or more consistently, and they had 13 salvations last month. Students from Mississippi College and Hinds Community College have been serving on Wednesday nights, and AWBC felt the need to pour into them as well, and a college ministry was created. Praise the Lord!

I have recently started a new ministry position at Roseland Park Baptist Church in Picayune, MS. This has been such an exciting blessing to be a part of what God has been doing through this church and this city in the last several years.

I do have plans to begin Seminary in the fall of 2014 at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Once again, I can continue my education because of the Cooperative Program. Through the blessing of CP, I can do what God has called me to do, and become what HE wants me to be.

To view this Cooperative Program Testimony online, please visit <http://www.mcbp.org/cp/videos.aspx>

Just for the Record



BIG LEVEL CHURCH, WIGGINS, celebrated Veterans Day.

In other Church News:

► **Algoma Church, Algoma**, will host its 22nd annual drive-through nativity Dec. 6 - 7, 6 - 9 p.m. No charge.

► **Allen Harris** will share in Christmas concerts at **Calvary Church, Canton**, Dec. 8, 3 p.m.; **Midway Church, Jackson**, Dec. 8, 5 p.m.; **First Church, Raymond**, Dec. 15, 4 and 7 p.m.; and **Pleasant**

Hills Church, Columbus, Dec. 22, 6 p.m.

► **Robin Brumfield** is having a book signing for his newest book, *Conquering the Inevitable: Coping with Change Based On Insights from Nehemiah*, Dec. 11, Meadville Public Library, from Noon - 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 - 6 p.m. Brumfield is the pastor of Providence Church, Meadville, and is active in Mississippi Baptist bivocational ministries.



CALVARY CHURCH, YAZOO CITY, was presented an American flag by Col. James Hartline, Vice Wing Commander, 172nd Airlift Wing, Jackson. The flag was flown over Bagram, Afghanistan on an Aerial Evacuation Mission. This was in recognition of pastor Caleb Clark's services as a chaplain in the Mississippi Air National Guard. Shown are Clark, Lee Ann Allison, and Ricky Shivers.

RELIEF

cont. from p. 1

the Philippines in the weeks ahead. Teams will be made up of volunteers possessing skills requested from the field. More information on the requested make-up of these teams will come after December 1," Gann said, noting that a specific date for activation has not yet been set.

Southern Baptist disaster relief officials have explained in the past that one of the keys to effective disaster relief operations is to schedule volunteers over a long period of time, so that personnel and supplies do not create a logjam in the first few weeks after a disaster and overwhelm the response.

"Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief does not self-deploy, but will work in partnership with Philippine Baptists, Baptist Global Response, International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board, and state convention leadership to support our partners," Gann said.

Social media and news programs around the world have reported on relief teams entering Filipino communities devastated by Typhoon Haiyan, but hundreds of other villages in extremely isolated areas have yet to see any relief.

Gann also reported that no out-of-state Baptist disaster relief units have been requested for the ongoing relief effort in response to the severe weather that swept the American Midwest on Nov. 17 and resulted in a number of fatalities and injuries.

Many of the Filipino villages are tucked away in northern Cebu's rolling hills and can only be found down winding, bumping roads barely wide enough for vehicles to traverse. These are the villages

that Southern Baptist relief teams hope to find.

While millions of dollars in relief aid is flowing into some hard-hit areas, many smaller communities must fend for themselves.

People in remote areas far from the main roads often are neglected for one to two weeks in the aftermath of a major disaster, said Larry Shine, a member of the four-man Baptist Global Response team sent to Cebu Island. The team's goal is to go into areas not highlighted in the media and partner with local pastors to bring relief to neglected communities.

Shine, pastor of Pine Forest Church in Onalaska, Texas, and Scottie Stice, pastor of Southwest Texas Cowboy Church in Uvalde, Texas, traveled Nov. 16 to work with Filipino pastor Nabanglo Driz.

Shine leads the international disaster relief task force for Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. Stice is the assistant state director of disaster relief for the convention.

"What Western churches can do is provide the financial aid resources he [Driz] doesn't have."

Larry Shine

pastor of Pine Forest Church in Onalaska, Texas

On a recent evening, Driz, Stice, and Shine sat down to discuss areas they visited. Shine asked questions to help Driz think through the rebuilding process and what resources they would need.

He encouraged Driz to use Filipino church members to deliver the relief supplies. "By using an existing network, it is more effective," Shine said. "The church is the best network in the world."

"What Western churches can do is provide the financial aid resources he [Driz] doesn't have," Shine added.

Shine encouraged Driz and his church to train others and

How can I help?

Mississippi Baptists can contribute to the relief effort through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Make checks payable to the MBCB, and note "Disaster Relief" on the memo line. Mail to MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

then encourage them to pass the knowledge on — an approach to humanitarian aid that facilitates church planting. The discussion then moved to what to include in relief kits and how best to transport the goods. Shine asked Driz to make himself available to minister to the families while others of his team are distributing supplies.

Driz, Stice, and Shine formulated a plan for aid relief and packets to be delivered the following week. Baptist Global Response will pur-

chase supplies for the relief packages with funds donated by supporters in the United States and elsewhere.

"We have full confidence in your ability to do this," Shine told Driz.

Mississippi Baptists can contribute to the relief effort through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Make checks payable to the MBCB, and note "Disaster Relief" on the memo line. Mail to MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

MS POSITIONS

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PART-TIME YOUTH PASTOR SEARCH. Send resumes to: Calvary Baptist Church Attn: Youth Committee P.O. Box 86 Fulton, MS 38843

MONROE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION IS RECEIVING RESUMES FOR ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS DIRECTOR until December 15, 2013. Send resumes to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 540, Amory, MS 38821, Attn: Allen Simpson. Or email: allen@bcamory.org. A job description is available by email.

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RED BANKS BAPTIST CHURCH IN RED BANKS, MS IS SEEKING A MINISTER OF MUSIC WHO WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO ASSIST THE PASTOR WITH OUTREACH MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY. Send resumes to Jonathan Childress, 139 N. Red Banks Rd., Red Banks, MS 38661 or E-mail the church at RBBC1848@outlook.com

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF COLDWATER IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME YOUTH AND CHILDRENS MINISTER. Send resume to fbcoldwater@bellsouth.net or mail to P.O. Box 347, Coldwater, MS 38618

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MT. OLIVE IS NOW ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF STUDENTS & FAMILY MINISTRIES. Please submit resumes or questions by e-mail to sheila@bcmo.org.

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Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

PHYSICIAN

cont. from p. 1

Ridge Church in Ridgeland.

The child's continued lack of any replication of the virus indicates the first documented case of HIV remission in a child. The New England Journal of Medicine reported Oct. 23, fostering renewed hope that the child is permanently cured.

"The big question, of course is, 'Is this child cured of HIV infection?'" the Journal article stated. "The best answer at this moment is a definitive 'maybe.'"

Gay, associate professor of pediatric infectious diseases at UMC, was first credited in March with achieving a "functional" cure of the child, indicating the viral presence remained in the child but was no longer replicating.

The viral presence was so low it could only have been detected by ultrasensitive methods, not standard clinical tests.

Gay treated the child, born to a mother who received no prenatal care, with an unprecedented and aggressive regimen of three antiviral medications within 30 hours of birth three years ago. The mother discontinued treatment of the baby after 18 months, but when she returned the baby for treatment at 23 months tests revealed that the virus had not been replicating.

Gay has been in the spotlight for months because of the achievement. She presented a case study of the baby on Nov. 5 to the prestigious Oxford Union in England, a forum for debate and discussion at Oxford University which has hosted an array of notables including world leaders since 1823.

The mother of four and

grandmother of one, who served six years as a Baptist medical missionary in the Horn of Africa 20 years ago, said she doesn't know why God is using her for such a public task as breaking barriers in the cure of pediatric HIV.

"I still have no idea why He picked the shiest pediatrician in America to do this, but I suppose I'll find out in heaven. I am by basic nature very shy, and fortunately I have a husband [Paul Gay] who is very outgoing and well-spoken, so in most cases I depend on him to do the talking but the problem is in this particular case, he's an accountant and he knows nothing about pediatric HIV disease."

The Gays continue to teach Bible Drill at Trace Ridge Church. A sermon pastor Steve Street delivered in March shortly after Gay was credited with achieving the functional cure reminded her of Moses' reticence for the spotlight.

"The first Sunday back when I went to church I found that my pastor was... just starting a series of sermons from Exodus, and on that first sermon he started preaching about the call of Moses and God saying to Moses, 'What's that in your hand?' and Moses saying, 'It's just a stick, God,' and then God proved to Moses that He can use just a stick to get water from a rock, or to part the Red Sea, or whatever, so with Moses protesting all along the way, 'God I can't talk, God sent him anyway'."

"I have felt very much like

"I still have no idea why He picked the shiest pediatrician in America to do this, but I suppose I'll find out in heaven."

Hannah Gay

Baptist physician

that and I can't tell you that I'm happy with the idea of having to be the one on the speaker's stage all the time. I'm still not happy with it, but there have been a lot of things that I have learned. I can't talk but God is providing words."

Still, she has welcomed venues in Mississippi, where she's using the platform to encourage prenatal care in the poorest state in the nation.

"I've been able here in Mississippi, in my own backyard, to really promote the prevention and get the message out there [that] all women need to get... prenatal care. They need to be tested for HIV during every pregnancy and, if positive, they need to be treated, so I'm giving the prevention message out here in Mississippi and that's something that I've wanted to do because we're much more interested in preventing HIV rather than curing it."

Gay continues to monitor the child whose identity has remained anonymous, and sends samples of the patient's blood to labs of her colleagues for ultrasensitive studies.

"I see the child on a regular basis, but several times a year I will be continuing to send samples of her blood to their research labs so that they can do these ultrasensitive tests, and in that way I'm better able to maybe get some early indication that, yeah, her virus may be getting ready to come back and if that's the case, then I'll know to start medicines right away — but hopefully it's not going to happen."

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

SEPTEMBER 2013

MEMORIALS

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Maxine Smith
Fidells SSC, Morrison Heights BC
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Mr. & Mrs. Dwight McComb
Ms. Cathy J. McComb
Carol Ann Snowden
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Mrs. Mildred E. Witcher
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The Woman's Missionary Union at **MONTICELLO BAPTIST CHURCH** hosted Celeste Cade, BCV Public Relations Associate, as their November guest speaker and donated pantry items for Dickerson Place Campus in Brookhaven.

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Baptist Children's Village has a new web site and we invite you to visit www.baptistchildrensvillage.com. There you will find our new video, historical information, contact information for each campus, a new and improved online donation form, information on how to connect with the ministry and much much more!

Live Selflessly • John 12:24-33, 35-36, 44-48

Today's lesson title, "Live Selflessly," is one of the greatest challenges of biblical Christian living. But Jesus lives out an example of selfless living here in the Gospel of John. The eleventh chapter of John had closed out with Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest ruling: "You're not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish." He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation," John 11:50-51 (HCSB). Jesus was not intimidated by this concerted effort of Jerusalem's Jewish leaders to trap and kill Him.

Our Background Passage, John 12, begins with Jesus openly and fearlessly heading to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Six days before the Passover Jesus arrived in Bethany to have dinner with his friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Jesus' friends were excited to have the master in their home but the Jewish leaders were not. Bethany was close to the crowds in Jerusalem and Jesus was back with Lazarus who He had just been raised from the dead after four days in the grave.

This miracle of raising Lazarus was so threatening to the chief priest that they decided they needed to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. Mary, however unintentionally, also angered the High Priest and their secret

ally, Jesus' traitor, Judas Iscariot by anointing Jesus' feet. Mary took a pound of pure expensive nard and poured it on Jesus' feet. Judas protested that 300 denarii worth of expensive oil should have been sold to help the poor. John tells us "He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what

was put in it," John 12:6 (HCSB).

Jesus immediately came to Mary's defense objecting strongly to Judas' hypocrisy and just plain meanness. "Jesus answered, 'Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.'" But it gets much worse for those opposed to Jesus.

A very large crowd gathered to welcome Jesus to the festival when they heard he was entering Jerusalem. However, the crowd did not understand what they cheered and chanted, "Hosanna! He who comes in the

name of the Lord is the blessed One - The King of Israel!" John 12:13 (HCSB). Jesus made this triumphal entry on a young donkey's colt fulfilling the specific Old Testament prophecy from Zechariah 9:9 (KJV) "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon

an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Jesus entering on the foal of a donkey is pointing to next week's Sunday School lesson, "Serve Humbly."

son, "Serve Humbly."

In the 23rd verse of the 12th chapter "Jesus replied to them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,'" (HCSB) Jesus is speaking much clearer to the 12 trying to help them understand the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection whose time has arrived.

In our lesson passage Jesus explains to the disciples that a wheat seed doesn't grow until it is placed in the ground and dies.

Speaking of His impending crucifixion Jesus said "But if it dies, it produces a large crop," John 12:24 (HCSB). Jesus did not want death but was willing to "Live Selflessly," but He still said, "Now My soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save Me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!" John 12:27-28 (HCSB).

According to verse 33 Jesus was trying to explain what kind of death He is ready to experience. Jesus wanted them to understand they needed to pay attention immediately. Jesus said, "The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn't overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn't know where he's going. While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become sons of light," John 12:35-36 (HCSB).

Jesus closed the 12th chapter assuring them He lived and taught totally in God's will saying: "So the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me," John 12:50 (HCSB).

Hicks is a consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a member of Brandon Church, Brandon.

Explore the Bible
with Don Hicks

A Problem You Can't Solve • Romans 1:16-17; 2:5-11; 3:9-12

The city of Rome was all about power. It was the capital of the mighty Roman Empire whose rule extended throughout much of the world and whose massive armies were powerful enough to squelch any power that rose against it. Yet a power greater than any other had silently infiltrated the mighty city, a power that could not be squelched— one with the ability and might to change men's lives from the inside out. It was the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul knew firsthand about this life changing power since his conversion on the road to Damascus. Paul boldly declared in his letter to the Romans that he was not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and then to the Greek. Through the ages the prophets of God had been foretelling the coming of the Messiah as God prepared His chosen people for their Savior. Yet John 1:11-12 records that Jesus came unto His own, but His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

In the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The Amplified Bible says it

beautifully: For in the Gospel a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith. As it is written, the man who through faith is just and upright shall live and shall live by faith. (v.17)

Where does that leave the morally upright who think their clean living and good works make them righteous? When they measure themselves against the hardened sinner who flaunts his sinfulness, they may feel that they measure up pretty good. Yet Paul wants them to understand that their own goodness does not exempt them from the wrath and judgment of God. Those who harden their hearts and stubbornly reject the Gospel, no matter how good or how bad they may be, are treasuring up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God when He will render to every man accord-

ing to his deeds. How horrified many will be when they realize that they do not have the righteousness that is required by God because they never humbled themselves and accepted the redemption that Christ provided for all. Judgment will be meted out to the Jew first and then to the Gentile because God is no respecter of persons. Those who reject him and do not obey the

truth will receive tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath. It will be a day of great misery and devastation that could have been

avoided if they had believed the Truth.

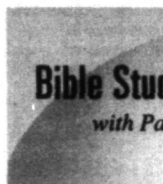
Those, however, who have trusted Christ and have patiently continued in well-doing, will receive eternal life, glory, honor and peace. Though salvation does not come from good works, but through faith in Christ alone, good works do flow from a relationship with Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are created in Christ Jesus

unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)

Finally, Paul contends that all stand guilty before God. There is none righteous. No one is innocent or guiltless before God. There is no one who seeks after God. We are hopelessly lost on our own. But for those of us who have trusted in Jesus Christ as our Lord, we realize that we didn't find Him. He found us. It is He who has placed within us a new heart and a new spirit. The apostle Peter wrote that His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him (2 Peter 1:3). What humility that should work in us as we interact with saints and sinners alike. Our goodness didn't lead us to repentance. God's goodness did.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 3:4-6, KJV)

Foster is a member of Murphy Creek Church, Louisville.

Bible Studies for Life
with Patsy Foster

STATES

cont. from p. 1

now — as it has for all times — is that Christians bear witness to the truth despite uncomfortable circumstances."

Before Illinois and Hawaii, same sex marriage also became legal in California, Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey and Rhode Island during 2013. The issue is in the courts in various states, and gay mar-

riage advocates are seeking electoral or legislative victories in other states.

Through 2016, HRC has targeted Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, and Oregon at the ballot box or in the states' respective legislatures.

Ahead "is an inevitable clash with the courts," Walker told BP. "Just about all the blue states that can pass same sex marriage have already done so, so legislatively same sex marriage ad-

vocates will have to rely on the courts to peel back the constitutional amendments that exist in over 30 states that protect the natural definition of marriage."

Victory for Christians may look different than successes in the states, Walker said. "In the short term, it is likely that marriage advocates like myself will experience more losses. In the long run, though, I'm not scoring victory along the lines of wins and losses. What matters is that Christians are found to

be faithful at a time when their views on marriage are being chastised in culture."

Quinn and Abercrombie saw their endorsements of same sex marriage as part of the American march against discrimination.

"This new law is an epic victory for equal rights in America," Quinn said of the Illinois measure. Abercrombie described the legalization of same-sex marriage in Hawaii as "part of the long history of civil rights movements."

Hawaii's new law will take effect Dec. 2, while Illinois' law will do so June 1 of next year.

In addition to the seven states that have legalized same sex marriage this year, three states — Maine, Maryland, and Washington — approved it in the November 2012 election.

The six states in which same sex marriage was legalized before 2012 are Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

Kazakh police: Christians 'worse than spies'

OSLO, Norway (BP) — Authorities in Kazakhstan have fined a Baptist pastor for leading a congregation without state registration and deported another, as part of an ongoing campaign to stamp out religious communities not under the government's control.

The Kazakh government fined Baptist pastor Pavel Leonov two months' average salary for leading a religious community without state registration, according to Forum 18, a Norway-based religious freedom organization.

Leonov refused to pay the fine, citing financial hardship and because he had done nothing wrong.

Leonov is one of more than 100 people known to have been fined in 2013 for religious "offenses," Forum 18 noted. After jailing Leonov for one day, police in Ayagoz, a city of 40,000 in eastern Kazakhstan, opened a criminal case against him on Oct. 28. He now faces up to a year in prison.

The trouble for Leonov, who leads a church in the Council of Baptist Churches, began with a police raid on the congregation on Feb. 28, Forum 18 reported, after which a district court levied the maximum possible fine against him. After another raid in April, seven other church members also were fined.

When Leonov appeared in court to answer for not paying the fine, he said he could not pay because he is the only breadwinner in his family of seven and he had done nothing wrong, according to Forum 18.

On Aug. 5, Judge Korlen Khalelova sentenced him to one day's imprisonment.

Nearly three months later, on Oct. 28, district police summoned Leonov and handed him an official notice that a criminal investigation had been opened against him on Sept. 7 for "willful refusal to carry out a court decision."

The penalty could involve a fine, between 120 and 180 hours of community service, or a year in prison.

Sumgat Adilbekov, head of the police investigation department, would not explain why Leonov was being punished for following his religion. "The initial investigation is underway," he told Forum 18 on Oct. 30 from Ayagoz. "I can't say any more on the case by phone."

In addition to taking Leonov to court, Kazakh authorities raided Sunday worship at a Council of Baptist Churches congregation in a private home on Sept. 22, according to Forum 18. Five police officers entered the home in Martuk, with two official witnesses also present.

Martuk is a village in a district of about 30,000 people in western Kazakhstan.

Police told the Baptists they had received a telephone call, and the police started filming without asking permis-

Human Rights Violations

According to Forum 18, Kazakhstan is a persistent violator of human rights commitments. The abuses Forum 18 has documented include:

- Attacks on religious freedom by government officials at all levels.
- Literature censorship.
- Legal restrictions on freedom of religion or belief.
- Raids, fines, threats, and interrogations against religious communities.
- Police surveillance of religious groups.
- Attempts to deprive religious communities of their property.



sion. In addition to confiscating DVDs and religious literature, six church members and three visitors were taken to the police station and questioned individually.

Church members told Forum 18 the police refused to hand over records of the confiscated materials.

On Oct. 24, district prosecutor Adilbek Kushzhanov began an investigation into the leader of Martuk Baptist congregation, Gennady Tsyba, under a law that bans "leading, participating in, or financing an unregistered, halted, or banned religious community or social organization," according to Forum 18.

Tsyba had also been fined in August 2011 for holding a worship meeting without state permission.

An official with the prosecutor's office defended the investigation to Forum 18. "Meeting without registration is against the law — the case is now in court," he said.

Asked whether this was like the old Soviet system where exercising freedom of belief or religion was illegal without state permission, the official told Forum 18: "No, it's not the Soviet system. This is the Kazakh system."

In another recent case against Baptists in Kazakhstan, Judge Talgat Ekzeesov of an administrative court in Karaganda, a city of 450,000 in east-central Kazakhstan, found Baptist leader Aron Reimer guilty of violating the same law. Tsyba was convicted of breaking.

Reimer was fined and his appeal against the fine rejected on Oct. 16.

Kazakh authorities also deported Baptist pastor Viktor Lim for "illegal missionary activity," according to Forum 18. A stateless person, Lim had lived in Kazakhstan for 20 years, where his wife and children are citizens.

In a case brought by the regional religious affairs department in Almaty, the nation's largest city with some 1.5 million people, Lim was accused of leading religious activity without registration as a missionary.

District court Judge Berikzhan Baizhunusov found Lim guilty on May 27, levied the maximum possible fine, and ordered him to be deported in 15 days. Lim appealed to the regional court, but Judge Yerlan Abdildin rejected his appeal on June 13, according to Forum 18.

"The appeal hearing lasted just 10 minutes — it was a pure formality," Lim told Forum 18. "No discussion took place."

Lim, who said he paid the fine, appealed to the General Prosecutor's Office, insisting he wanted to stay in Kazakhstan, Forum 18 reported, but Deputy General Prosecutor Zhakip Asanov rejected the appeal on July 26 in a letter seen by Forum 18.

"The court did not accept the argument that conducting services, religious rites and ceremonies was not missionary activity, as these actions are means of spreading a religious faith," the letter said.

Lim left Kazakhstan on Aug. 16 with his wife and children. "We weren't prepared for this at all," he told Forum 18.

"I and my family are still recovering from shock."

Police in the capital of Astana also have been intimidating and harassing members of Grace Protestant Church, according to International Christian Concern (ICC), an organization that supports the persecuted church.

The church's pastor, Bakhytzhon Kashkumbayev, had been arrested in May as part of the crackdown on religious minorities. ICC reported that police collected information on the church's regular attendees and began calling and harassing both present and past congregants.

"They are scared to go to church. His church keeps getting smaller and smaller."

When a congregant asked police why they have been treating church members this way, an officer reportedly responded, "You are worse than spies. You bring Kazakhs to Christ."

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"They are scared to go to church. His church keeps getting smaller and smaller."

ICC contact

"You are worse than spies. You bring Kazakhs to Christ."

Kazakh officer